

"The Marsh as a Site of Resistance: A Marxist Reading of Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018)"

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Abstract:

This research paper applies Marxist literary criticism to analyze Delia Owens' novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) and explores the relationship between individual experience and larger social and economic structures. The study employs fundamental concepts from Marxist theory, including base and superstructure, alienation, and class struggle, to examine how the novel portrays the Marsh as a site of resistance against the dominant social and economic systems of Barkley Cove. By focusing on the character of Kya, the paper highlights the ways in which social and economic discrimination contribute to feelings of alienation and isolation. It argues that the novel emphasizes the importance of collective action and solidarity as means of challenging established power structures.

Furthermore, the research investigates the role of language and literature in the novel, emphasizing the power of words and rhetoric in the resistance process. The study analyzes how Owens employs language to expose and critique dominant cultural and ideological discourses, advocating for social justice and equality. Through a critical reading of key passages, the paper demonstrates how literature can be utilized as a tool for political critique and social change. The study emphasizes the significance of closely examining the language and rhetoric employed in literary works to fully comprehend their social and political implications, ultimately highlighting the importance of paying attention to the ways in which literature engages with broader socio-political contexts.

Key Words: Delia Owens, *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018), Karl Marx, Marxist literary criticism, The Marshes of North Carolina.

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1. Introduction:

In recent years, Delia Owens' novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) has gained immense popularity and critical acclaim. The novel is set in the North Carolina marshlands and follows the story of Kya, a little girl who is abandoned by her family and forced to live alone in the marshes of North Carolina. While the novel has been praised for its exploration of issues as Feminism, isolation, love, and sorrow, this research attempts to present a Marxist reading of the novel, with a special emphasis on the marsh as a site of resistance.

Marxism, as a theoretical framework, is based on the concept that the method of production and the conflict between distinct classes essentially define social relations. As the working-class battles against capitalist exploitation, Marxists believe that resistance is not only feasible, but also unavoidable. In relation, this paper examines the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) and argues that it offers a compelling critique of capitalism and the exploitation of the environment, while also revealing the potential for resistance and emancipation within the natural realm.

2. Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018), A Background:

Delia Owens is an American wildlife scientist and author who received international praise for her debut novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018). Owens, who was born in Georgia in 1949, studied zoology before earning a PhD in Animal Behavior from the University of California, Davis. She spent several years studying animals in Africa before returning to the United States to write full-time. Her novel

Where the Crawdads Sing (2018) occurred on to be named a New York Times best-seller and has been translated into more than 40 languages with 18 million copies sold. It has also achieved multiple honors and awards, including the 2018 Goodreads Choice Award for Best Fiction. In July 2022 a film adaptation was also released holding the same name as the novel. Owens' biology expertise and love of environment are obvious in her work, which frequently includes evocative descriptions of nature

Where the Crawdads Sing (2018), tells the story of a young girl named Kya who grows up alone in the marshes of North Carolina and is accused of murder later in life. The narrative takes place in the 1950s, when Kya is just six years old, and her mother abandons her home, quickly followed by her siblings. This was evidently due to her father's abusive behavior and alcoholism. Eventually, her father also left without informing Kya beforehand. She is left alone in their decaying marsh hut, with just the odd visit to a local merchant, Jumpin', and his wife, Mabel, to provide her with supplies and food. Kya becomes more self-sufficient as she gets older, learning to fish and hunt in the marsh and gaining a profound love and appreciation of the natural world around her.

Despite experiencing solitude, Kya demonstrates a yearning for human connection, which prompts her to gradually develop a sense of openness upon encountering Tate Walker, a local resident. Tate teaches Kya to read and write and encourages her to pursue her scientific and natural interests. As they get older, their friendship evolves into a relationship, but Tate eventually travels to attend college, leaving Kya alone once more. The novel simultaneously involves another parallel

storyline which takes place in 1969 when a local man named Chase Andrews is found dead in the marsh. As the local authorities investigate the murder, suspicion falls on Kya, who is seen as an outsider. The novel follows the trial and the aftermath of the murder, as Kya's past and her relationship with Chase are slowly revealed.

Kya and Chase initially meet as teenagers, while he is a popular high school student. Despite their social class and background disparities, they are drawn to one other and begin a covert romance. Chase, on the other hand, is not completely dedicated to Kya and frequently varies between expressing his attention and ignoring her. This causes Kya, who is eager for love and connection, a great degree of emotional pain. Chase gets more possessive and domineering as Kya and Chase's relationship develops. He is envious of Kya's bond with Tate, her childhood friend and former boyfriend, and attempts to assert power over her. Kya, who is still much in love with Chase, tolerates his behavior in the hope that he would treat her better in the future. The final straw is Kya's discovery that Chase is engaged to another woman. Kya confronts him, devastated and betrayed, sparking a heated argument. Chase lashes out at Kya, seriously wounding her. She flees into the marsh, where she spends many weeks hiding. Their relationship ends in tragedy when Chase's body is found in the marsh, and Kya is accused of his murder. Nevertheless, the evidence against her is not enough to secure a conviction, and she is ultimately found innocent and released. At the end of the novel, after Kya's death, Tate, who married Kya after the trial, discovers evidence that suggests she did in fact kill Chase, leading to a painful realization of the truth.

The story of Kya in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) may be viewed through the lens of Marxist literary criticism since it depicts the impact of social class inequality on an individual's life. Kya's family abandons her, leaving her to fend for herself in the marshlands, where she battles for survival due to poverty and a lack of resources. Because of her inferior social position and lack of education, she experiences prejudice and isolation from the larger community as she gets older. This marginalization is exacerbated by the activities of individuals such as Chase Andrews, who symbolize the rich and powerful elite and who exploit and oppress others in lower social strata. Through Kya's narrative, the novel portrays the often concealed hardships and injustices arising from social class inequalities, shedding light on the challenges faced by individuals and the obliviousness of those in positions of privilege.

2.1. Marxist Literary Criticism

Marxist Literary criticism is recognized to emphasize the relevance of social and economic aspects in the formation of literary works and cultural goods, arguing that literature reflects social and economic realities. According to Terry Eagleton, Marxist criticism is not limited to a mere examination of the sociological aspects of literature, such as publication processes or the depiction of the working class. Instead, its objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the literary work by attentively analyzing its forms, styles, and meanings, while also recognizing that these elements are shaped by a specific historical context (Eagleton 3). Eagleton contends that Marxist literary criticism is a critical method that strives to discover the social, economic, and political elements that impact

literary creation and reception. It investigates the relationship between literature and social and economic systems, particularly in terms of power and class struggle underlining the method by which literature may be used to impact social and political change. This is achieved by not only reflecting, but also by challenging dominant cultural ideologies.

Marxist criticism additionally stresses the writer's obligation as a social and political activist who may use writing to reveal society's conflicts and injustices to achieve social justice and equality. It maintains that literature is a result of social and historical factors rather than a neutral or objective portrayal of reality, and that authors have a responsibility to engage with and critique the social and economic systems of their period. Here Karl Marx, in his preface *to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, states "the mode of production of material life determines altogether the social, political, and intellectual life process. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being, that determines their consciousness." (Marx I). This remark is recognized as a crucial principle of Marxist theory, emphasizing the primacy of material and economic conditions in molding society and human consciousness.

Consequently, key concepts in Marxist literary theory embrace base and superstructure, which refer to society's economic and social structures as well as their cultural and ideological manifestations. Alienation is another concept reflecting the individuals' estrangement from their labor and one another under capitalism. Moreover, hegemony can be also considered as part of the shaping modes of

Marxist literary theory indicating the dominant cultural and ideological discourses that shape how people think and act.

2.2. The Swamps of North Carolina

While Barkley Cove is a fictional locale, the socioeconomic situations shown in *Where the Crawdads Sing* reflect many of the historical and present realities of North Carolina's swamp areas. Delia Owens commences her novel with a brief history of the area including a description of the perilous shoreline that early explorers faced. Owens writes, "The marsh was guarded by a torn shoreline, labeled by early explorers as the 'Graveyard of the Atlantic' because riptides, furious winds, and shallow shoals wrecked ships like paper hats along what would become the North Carolina coast" (4). This information is accurate and based on the region's historical records. Because of the conditions generated by the shoreline and the Atlantic Ocean, the North Carolina coast has a lengthy history of shipwrecks and maritime tragedies. Owens uses this historical backdrop to create the tone for the novel emphasizing the swamplands' natural beauty and hardships, as well as the endurance and adaptation of the people who live there.

Owens carries on stating:

"It was now 1952, so some of the claims had been held by a string of disconnected, unrecorded persons for four centuries. Most before the Civil War. Others squatted on the land more recently, especially after the World Wars, when men came back broke and broke-up. The marsh did not confine them but defined them and, like any sacred ground, kept their secrets deep. No one cared that they held

the land because nobody else wanted it. After all, it was wasteland bog" (4).

She adequately implies that the people who resided in North Carolina's swamplands during this time were frequently detached from larger society, with many living on unregistered claims or simply squatting on the property. Many soldiers suffered from poverty and struggled as a result of the Civil War and World Wars causing them to seek sanctuary in the marshy terrain. Despite their seclusion and scarcity of resources, these people found identity and belonging in the wetlands. The quote additionally emphasizes how the land in the marsh was generally viewed as unwanted and useless by strangers, yet it was a precious and significant part of the people who lived there. The novel depicts the challenges of the region's rural inhabitants, which suffered poverty, prejudice, and restricted access to education and healthcare.

John Collins in his article *Rural America, Scalawags, Rednecks, Mudsills and Swamp People: 400 Years on America's Fringe*, writes:

"Much later, during the Civil War, their children's children would provide cannon fodder for the South's planter elite. By this time, an indigent class, believed to be beyond all hope of social reform, had been widely accepted as an unfortunate but inevitable societal fringe — a 'permanent breed'" (Collins)

Collins sheds light on the descendants of those who initially lived in North Carolina's wetlands. According to the text, those who lived in the marshes throughout the nineteenth century were frequently destitute

and disenfranchised, with little opportunities for social development. As a result, during the Civil War, their children and grandchildren were frequently recruited into the Confederate army, acting as cannon fodder for the planter class. By the 1950s, this impoverished class had become a permanent and accepted component of society, considered as beyond social reform and pushed to the margins. They lacked fundamental requirements such as healthcare, education, and economic prospects, making existence in this location incredibly difficult.

For individuals living in the swamp areas, access to healthcare was a major challenge. Hospitals, physicians, and nurses were in short supply, and sickness rates were high related to a lack of the hygiene and access to healthcare. Infant mortality was much greater than the national norm. Furthermore, marsh people suffered prejudice from the healthcare system, compounding the problem. Furthermore, education was also a rather difficult aspect for those who lived in the swamplands. School attendance was low, especially after elementary school, and schools lacked enough funding and resources for students. Given schools, swamp children faced discrimination, and many believed that education was unnecessary or unattainable given their poverty.

The majority relied on subsistence living due to a lack of economic prospects. When looking for work outside of the marsh, applicants faced discrimination, and landowners and companies frequently exploited them. Poverty rates were exceedingly high owing to a lack of work possibilities, causing many people to struggle to care for themselves and their children.

3. A Marxist reading of *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018):

To fully understand *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) from a Marxist perspective, it is essential to examine and apply the various concepts of Marxist theory such as base and superstructure, alienation, class struggle, and the relationship between language and literature in the novel. In addition, an analysis of the social and economic conditions that shape the characters' lives and interactions, and explore the power dynamics and conflicts that arise in a capitalist society is essential to the purpose of the research.

3.1. Base and Superstructure:

The concept of base and superstructure is a fundamental aspect of Marxist theory and is an important concept in Marxist literary criticism. According to Marx, the social and economic structure of a society is the "base" upon which all other aspects of society, such as culture, politics, and ideology, are built. This base is made up of the material conditions of production, including the means of production (such as factories, tools, and machinery) and the relations of production (such as the relationship between workers and owners). The "superstructure" refers to the cultural, political, and ideological aspects of society, including religion, law, politics, philosophy, and art. These elements are shaped by and are dependent on the base, as they arise from and are informed by the economic and social conditions of society.

In Marxist literary criticism, the concept of base and superstructure can be used to explore how the economic and social conditions of a society influence the literary works produced within

that society. Marxist critics argue that literary works are not created in a vacuum but are shaped by the economic and social conditions of the society in which they are produced. By examining the base and superstructure in a literary work, Marxist critics can analyze how the economic and social conditions of a society form the characters and events in the work, as well as the themes and messages conveyed by the literary corpses.

When examining *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) from a Marxist perspective, it is important to consider the novel's portrayal of both base and superstructure. As previously mentioned, the base refers to the economic and social structure of society, while the superstructure includes cultural and ideological aspects. The novel's base may be observed in the main heroine, Kya, and her family's poverty and economic hardships. Kya's family is impoverished, and she lives in a remote location with limited choices for work. Kya's mother abandons her children because of her husband's ill treatment and violence. Following her mother, Kya's sisters and brother managed to flee leaving Kya with their father. Eventually, her father too abandoned her, leaving Kya to fend for herself. Kya's experiences and prospects are shaped by her poverty and lack of resources throughout the novel, including her restricted access to school and reliance on the natural environment for survival.

Early in the novel, we learn that Kya's father's family was a victim of the Great Depression, which was a period of severe economic downturn that began in the late 1920s and lasted until the late 1930s. During this time, many families experienced financial hardship, and Kya's father's family was no exception. As the depression deepened, the

bank auctioned off their land, which forced them to leave their home and move to a small cabin that was formerly occupied by slaves. Kya's father was also forced to leave school and find a job among slaves to support his family. This experience had a profound impact on Kya's father, as it caused him to develop a deep-seated anger and resentment towards the economic system that had caused his family to lose their land and forced him to work in difficult conditions as a child.

Later in life, Kya's father moved to New Orleans, where he met Kya's mother and married her. However, he struggled with alcoholism and eventually lost all of his money. As a result, he moved to the marsh and lived on his war pension, which was a reflection of the economic struggles that many veterans faced during this time. Kya's father's experiences highlight the ways in which the Great Depression and the economic system of the time shaped individuals' lives and experiences. The loss of his family's land and his experiences working in difficult conditions as a child had a profound impact on him, which is reflected in his struggles with alcoholism and his eventual move to the marsh.

In addition to Kya, Delia Owens introduces the character of Jumpin who elaborates the element of base in the Marxist literary theory. Jumpin is a black man who lives on the outskirts of the town where the story takes place. He serves as a father figure to the main character, Kya, and helps her survive. He is a poor black man who is illiterate and has little prospects for social or economic progress. Jumpin's persona stands in stark contrast to the novel's other characters, who are primarily white and middle-class. The story illustrates the economic and social inequities that exist in society via his experiences, as well as how these imbalances impact the lives of people like Jumpin.

Jumpin's friendship with Kya exemplifies the value of community and solidarity in the face of injustice. Despite their disparities in color and socioeconomic rank, Jumpin and Kya form a profound friendship that transcends their divides. Their relationship is a kind of resistance to society's harsh conditions, highlighting the possibility for solidarity among the marginalized.

Moreover, the novel's superstructure is visible in the different cultural and ideological ideas and practices that affect the characters' lives. In *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018), Kya's family's social and economic circumstances, as well as their existence in the marshes, contribute to Barkley Cove residents' opinion of their family as inferior and "animal-like." This perspective reflects the social and racial biases that prevailed in the South throughout the novel's historical period. They are poor and uneducated, putting them at a disadvantage in a culture that values wealth and knowledge. Furthermore, their presence in the marshes, which are seen as "wild" and "uncivilized," strengthens their image as outsiders. In other words, as a consequence of their poverty, lack of education, and location in the marshes, the people of Barkley Cove, who are typically wealthier and better educated than Kya's family, see them as inferior and "backwards." Even more, Kya, is socially and economically isolated as a result of her poverty and lack of education. As a result, she faces marginalization from members of society who regard her as inferior.

In *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018), Miss Pansy Price reprimands some boys for riding their bikes carelessly and almost running into her. When one of the boys attributed their actions to Kya, a poor white girl from the marshes, Miss Pansy used the derogatory

term "swamp trash" (Owens 15) to refer to her. This reflects the class and racial prejudices that exist in the novel. The use of such language reinforces the perception of Kya as inferior and unworthy. Miss Pansy's statement also conveys the idea that individuals are accountable for their own actions and cannot blame others, even if those individuals belong to stigmatized groups.

Additionally, the idea that crimes committed in the marsh are generally ignored by the police is another example of superstructure. The police's negligence towards the crimes committed in the marsh is based on the belief that "Why interrupt rats killing rats?" (Owens 19). This phrase implies that the police view the people who live in the marsh as inferior and unworthy of protection or justice. However, when Chase Andrews, a wealthy and prominent member of the community, is found dead in the marsh, the police make an exception to their usual neglect of crimes in the area. This is another example of superstructure in the novel, as it highlights the privilege and power that comes with belonging to a higher class. The police's response to Chase's death is shaped by his social status and the belief that his life is worth more than the lives of those who live in the marsh.

Barkley Cove's bigotry and prejudice are ubiquitous and deeply established in the community's social and cultural systems to the point that there are separate churches for white and black people, which demonstrates the racial division in the neighborhood. This division echoes the historical heritage of racism in the American South, where laws and traditions were established to segregate black and white people. Furthermore, the community's religious organizations, which should be preaching love, compassion, and inclusiveness, are instead

involved in maintaining bigotry and prejudice. Pastors and preachers actively endorse and assist racial division by allowing separate churches for white and black people. This communicates to the population that segregation is acceptable and normal, reinforcing the notion that certain people are naturally superior to others depending on their race. Evidently, religious institutions constitute a component of the superstructure that sustains Barkley Cove's dominant power systems. Pastors and preachers, as well as their spouses, are highly respected, and they dress and conduct accordingly. This perpetuates the idea that those in positions of control are deserving of respect and devotion, while those on the fringes are considered to be beneath and undeserving.

In relation, while Kya is waiting for her father at the Piggly Wiggly store. A young girl approaches Kya and says hello, but before Kya can respond, Teresa White, the preacher's wife, rushes over and pulls her daughter away from Kya, warning her not to go near her saying "Meryl Lynn, dahlin', don't go near that girl, ya hear me. She's dirty." (Owens 55). And when asked by another woman if there is anything wrong, Teresa explains "I saw her in time. Thank you, Jenny. I wish those people wouldn't come to town. Look at her. Filthy. Plumbnasty. There's that stomach flu goin' around and I just know for a fact it came in with them. Last year they brought in that case of measles, and that's serious." (Owens 55). Here, Teresa White's use of the word "dirty" to describe Kya reflects the idea that some people are inherently unclean or unworthy based on their race or social status. Owens elaborates the reality that discrimination and prejudice are not restricted to certain groups or people, but are a widespread issue in

society that may harm everyone, regardless of position or rank. Even moral leaders, such as religious figures, can promote bias and bigotry if they do not actively seek to question and remove these ideas. Furthermore, Teresa's behavior underlines the need to render individuals and organizations accountable for their actions. While it is easy to dismiss discriminatory behavior as the actions of a few bad apples, it is critical to recognize that these beliefs are frequently firmly embedded in a community's social and cultural institutions.

Again, it is of great significance to refer to the character of Jumpin in this specific point. Within the narrative, Jumpin is harassed by a group of boys who attack him while he is walking. While Kya was walking to town she heard a boy saying "Ain't we lucky. Here comes a nigger walkin' to Nigger Town." (Owens 82). The boys' actions and usage of the disparaging epithet "nigger" indicate a system of oppression based on race, which is a recurring subject throughout the novel. In this context, the boys, who are most likely white, believe they are superior to Jumpin' due to his color and use their dominance to insult, humiliate, and physically hurt him. Marx's concept of superstructure, which refers to the cultural and ideological characteristics of a society that suffer and reinforce its current economic system, exemplifies this governing imbalance. In this example, their views and behaviors are influenced by a wider cultural framework that favors white people while marginalizing people of color. Furthermore, Jumpin chooses not to defend himself physically, despite being much stronger than the boys. This decision reflects his awareness of the unjust community in which he lives, one that is based on discrimination and prejudice. Jumpin knows that any resistance will

cause further damage to himself and potentially to his family, as the white community holds the power and can exercise it without repercussions. His reaction to the boys' behavior might be interpreted as a mirror of the repressive economic system in which he lives. Jumpin', as a Black man in the divided South, is likely to suffer restricted economic and social mobility, leaving him subject to the abuse and maltreatment of those in authority.

3.2. Alienation:

Marxist theory also emphasizes the concept of alienation, which refers to the estrangement of individuals from their labor and from each other under capitalism. In *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018), Kya's experiences of isolation and marginalization can be seen as a form of alienation, as she is disconnected from the social and economic structures of the larger capitalist world. However, the natural environment of the Marsh serves as a source of connection and belonging for Kya, shedding light on the ways in which the natural world can serve as a site of resistance against alienation.

In *Where the Crawdads Sing*, (2018) Kya's emotions of isolation and marginalization may be interpreted as a form of alienation since she is cut off from Barkley Cove's dominant culture and philosophy. As a result, she is forced to rely on her own resources to create her own sense of identity and belonging. Consequently, Kya's alienation stems from her social and financial exclusion. Because she is a poor, uneducated girl from the Marsh, the inhabitants of Barkley Cove see her as weird and inferior. This sense of otherness is fueled by the town's dominant cultural and ideological discourses, which favor

conformity and exclusion. As a result, Kya feels disconnected from the world's larger social and economic dynamism.

Kya's first day at school occurred when she was seven years old. A Truancy officer arrives one day to pick up Kya and take her to school. The officer attempts to persuade her that she would be able to eat breakfast and even chicken pie. Kya, on the other hand, lacks shoes and must go school barefoot. Consequently, Kya arrived at school wearing old, tattered clothes and was subjected to ridicule by her peers. The moment Kya arrives at school, she is quickly mocked and bullied by the other students. She is isolated and ostracized by the others, who regard her as an outcast owing to her poverty and lack of social skills. On her way home in the school bus, Kya heard the girls calling her name and chanting "Where ya been, marsh hen? Where's yo'hat, swamp rat?" (Owens 25). The other children's hatred for Kya and her perceived inferior social position is demonstrated by the use of insulting phrases such as "marsh hen" and "swamp rat." Kya's bullying experience is a major factor in her decision not to return to school ever again, which ultimately leads to her alienation from the community. Overwhelmed by the other girls' cruelty and her own humiliation, Kya fled and found refuge in the marshes. She was too embarrassed to return to school after this occurrence. Moreover, she was also concerned about having to endure more mocking and bullying. Kya feels isolated and rejected by other children, making it harder for her to form genuine connections as she grows older. The incident also reiterates the relevance of social position and how it may affect a person's sense of community and self-worth. Kya's poverty and lack of upbringing make her an easy target for other children's intimidation, reaffirming her belief that she does not belong in their society.

Despite the truant officer's best efforts, Kya was always able to flee and avoid her attempts to deliver her to school. She found refuge in nature and preferred to spend her time exploring the marshes and observing the species that lived there. Kya's decision to forego school was a reaction to the loneliness and rejection she felt from her friends, not a reflection of her intelligence or capacity to learn. Her love of the natural world, along with her inherent curiosity, prompted her to gain a thorough grasp of the marshes and the species that lived there.

Conversely, it is the natural environment of the Marsh that provides Kya with a sense of connection and belonging demonstrating how the natural world may serve as a site of resistance against alienation. It delivers Kya with a sense of identity and belonging that is uninfluenced by the town's primary cultural and ideological discourses. Owen Writes "The sun, warm as a blanket, wrapped Kya's shoulders, coaxing her deeper into the marsh..... Kya laid her hand upon the breathing, wet earth, and the marsh became her mother." (28). The excerpt vividly portrays the role that the marsh plays in Kya's life. The marsh provides her with comfort and solace, taking the place of her absent mother and contributing to her sense of alienation from human society. Here, the description of the sun "warm as a blanket" and the land catching her when she stumbled highlights the sense of safety and warmth that Kya finds in the marsh. The marsh becomes her mother, a nurturing presence that provides her with the love and support that she has been denied by human society. While the marsh offers Kya tranquilly and a sense of identity, it additionally leads to her solitary existence. She becomes so caught up in the natural world that she struggles to relate to people and form meaningful relationships. This is

underlined by her nickname "Marsh Girl," which stresses her obvious distinction from the other residents of her community.

Kya's strong attachment to nature leads to her isolation from human culture. Because of her social isolation, she lacks the social skills and information required to negotiate the complicated social systems of the adjacent town. She is perceived as an outsider due to her poverty and unique way of living. The natural environment becomes her shelter, a place where she may escape the human world's judgement and rejection. Nature has a diverse and intricate role in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018). On the one hand, it brings Kya peace and consolation, giving her a feeling of belonging and purpose. On the other side, it adds to her alienation from human society by emphasizing the conflict between nature and civilization. Kya's relationship with the natural environment becomes increasingly entwined with her feelings of isolation and alienation as the story progresses, molding her identity and her journey.

It is also noteworthy to admit the fact that Kya's bond with nature evolves as she grows older and more aware of the world outside the marsh. She becomes aware of the fragility of the natural world around her, as well as the dangers posed by human progress. She becomes a wetland champion, fighting to protect it from modern civilization's invasion. Throughout the years, Kya's relationship with nature becomes more strained as she confronts with her own identity and place in the world. She recognizes that her deep devotion to nature has resulted in her alienation from modern civilization. She must confront the fact that, despite her love of nature, she is still a human being seeking connection and community. Kya's bond with nature comes full circle in the end. She understands that the natural

environment will always be a part of who she is, but she also recognizes that she needs human connection and community to survive. Nature continues to provide her with peace and serenity, but she also recognizes the value of human connections and the need for human connection.

Aside from Kya's experiences with alienation, the story delves into how other characters suffer alienation as a result of their social and economic standing. This concept can be applied to the characters of Jumpin and his wife. They are African Americans from the agrarian South who inhabit the outskirts of civilization. They are alienated in a variety of ways, including economic, social, and cultural estrangement. Because of their ethnicity and socioeconomic status, they are isolated from mainstream society and denied access to resources and opportunities. The dominant white power structure economically marginalizes and exploits Jumpin and his wife. They work for modest wages and are striving to make ends meet. They are socially isolated from mainstream society and endure prejudice and discrimination. They are culturally compelled to negotiate a world that does not accept or respect their beliefs and traditions. They are introduced by Owens to expose the manner in which structural inequalities and power imbalances can contribute to the marginalization and exclusion of some groups in society.

Nevertheless, the narrative exhibits several instances of collective action and solidarity, which serve to challenge dominant power structures and promote social justice and equality diminishing the state of alienation. Tate is an example of collective action, since he understands the value of education in empowering Kya and assisting

her in challenging the social and economic marginalization she faces. He uses unity to battle the town's conventional cultural and ideological discourses, which favor conformity and isolation, and stresses the value of education as a tool for gaining economic and social power.

Tate is immediately taken to Kya's brilliance and curiosity when they first meet. He recognizes her ability and volunteers to teach her to read and write. He eventually becomes one of Kya's closest friends and confidants, paying her visits and teaching her about science, literature, and the world beyond the marsh. His encouragement and support are critical in assisting Kya in developing her writing abilities. He acknowledges her potential and encourages her to follow her ambition of becoming a published novelist. He even assists her in navigating the publishing world, introducing her to a literary agent who assists her in getting her book published. Tate's connection with Kya is a moving illustration of how friendship and mentoring can change a person's life. Tate helps Kya realize her potential and fulfil her aspirations via his compassion, encouragement, and support, outlining the value of human connection and the transformational power of education.

Tate defies the traditional constraints that have kept Kya illiterate and impoverished by teaching her to read and write. He assists her in revealing all of her strengths and equips her with the skills she needs to overcome the constraints imposed by society. Tate's faith in Kya's ability, as well as his encouragement to pursue her interests in science and writing, provide her the confidence she needs to express herself in a world that has always been hostile to her. Furthermore, Tate's friendship with Kya calls into question the town's bigotry. Tate, as a white male, is supposed to conform to the racial hierarchy and

keep his distance from Kya, a little white girl living alone in the marshes. Tate, on the other hand, defies expectations by forming a deep relationship with Kya, treating her as an equal and respecting her for who she is, regardless of her history or social class. His connection with Kya functions as an aspect of defiance to the societal standards and prejudices to which Kya is exposed. His faith in her ability and encouragement to pursue her interests provide her the tools she needs to overcome societal constraints. He acts as a symbol of hope by defying the town's biases and intolerance, signaling that it is possible to break free from society's confines and achieve one's ambitions.

The novel also introduces another level of the power of collective action in challenging the legal and political structures of the town. When Kya is accused of the murder of Chase Andrews, her lawyer, Tom Milton, and his wife, Lucy, come together to defend her in court. Tom provides Kya with legal assistance as one of the ways he assists her. As a criminal law specialist, he can help Kya navigate the complicated legal system and establish a powerful defense plan. He collaborates closely with Kya and her supporters to gather evidence and develop a case to prove her innocence. In addition to his legal knowledge, Tom offers emotional support to Kya during the trial. He recognizes Kya's trauma and grief in her life and seeks to ensure that she is treated with compassion and understanding. By attentively engaging with her narrative and providing a sense of being heard and acknowledged, he facilitates a crucial aspect of her journey towards recovery. Tom's presence at the trial is vital to gaining Kya's release and ensuring justice is served. He is a devoted supporter of Kya, working tirelessly to clear her reputation and restore her image. His

commitment to justice and fairness illustrates how the legal system may be used to protect the vulnerable while also ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The mentioned collective action is a perfect illustration of Marxist literary theory, which accentuates the need of understanding the fiscal and societal elements that drive cultural creation, as well as the role of culture in furthering social equitable growth.

3.3. Class Struggle:

Social struggle, within a Marxist framework, refers to the inherent tension and conflict that arises between various social classes due to the unequal distribution of resources and the exploitation of labor. In *Manifesto of the communist part* (1871), Marx and Engels write that “[...] the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (59). It underscores the fundamental idea that society is divided into opposing classes with conflicting interests: the bourgeoisie, who own and control the means of production, and the proletariat, who sell their labor power for wages.

In literature, the theme of social struggle serves as a lens through which writers analyze and critique the existing social order. Through narratives of oppression, resistance, and revolution, authors illuminate the inherent contradictions and injustices embedded within capitalist societies. They expose the exploitation and alienation experienced by the working class, the struggles for basic rights and dignity, and the quest for social emancipation. Moreover, literature influenced by Marxism often highlights the structural and systemic nature of social struggle, emphasizing that it is not merely an individual or personal struggle, but a collective and historical one.

The novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) explores the theme of social class via the experiences of its protagonist, Kya Clark. Marxist literary theory is concerned with how literature reflects and challenges the social and economic circumstances of its time. The story depicts a society that is separated along class lines. Kya, the primary character, is born into poverty and is subjected to different sorts of marginalization as a result of her socioeconomic standing. The locals dismiss her as a "swamp rat" and refuse to embrace her as one of their own. This exclusion is the outcome of the town's social class structure, in which individuals born into money and privilege wield power and influence over those who are not. The story also reveals how the ruling class employs belief systems to preserve power and control over the working class. The townspeople's sense in their own superiority over Kya reflects the dominant worldview that keeps the existing quo in place. This ideology serves to rationalize the town's social and economic inequities, since those in authority may keep their position by convincing the working class that their inferiority is natural and merited.

In numerous ways, the narrative challenges this prevailing paradigm. First, it introduces Kya, a protagonist who is born into poverty and faces different sorts of marginalization as a result of her socioeconomic situation. Despite these obstacles, Kya is a tenacious and resourceful young woman who can live and grow in the natural environment around her. Kya's bond to nature and her propensity to find peace within it additionally functions as a sort of opposition to the repressive societal institutions that exclude her. Kya finds a haven in nature's bounty, which gives her a sense of security and independence

that she lacks in human civilization. Kya reclaims agency and affirms her uniqueness via her personal relationship with the marshlands, resisting society expectations and standards that desire to characterize and regulate her. This representation highlights the inherent strength and endurance of oppressed people, implying that alternate forms of power and resistance exist outside of traditional social structures.

Second, the book challenges mainstream ideology by demonstrating how the ruling class utilizes ideology to preserve power and control over the working class. However, the story reveals the weaknesses and contradictions in this ideology by demonstrating how it is built on incorrect assumptions and preconceptions. The novel demonstrates how the ruling class uses ideology as a weapon for social control and supremacy over the working class, while also revealing the flaws and inconsistencies in this ideology. The story explores the assumptions and prejudices that underpin the ruling class's ideology via Kya's alternative way of life and her intimate connection with nature. Delia Owens encourages readers to critically evaluate and challenge the mainstream thinking, and to investigate alternative viewpoints and value systems that may offer a more real and inclusive vision of human life and satisfaction.

3.4 Language and Literature:

Marxist theory also emphasizes the power of language and literature to shape and reflect social and economic structures. In *Where the Crawdads Sing*, (2018) the power of language and literature is essential to the process of resistance against dominant cultural and ideological discourses. Through close analysis of key passages from the novel, it is clear how Owens uses language and rhetoric to expose and

critique dominant cultural and ideological discourses, and to promote social justice and equality. The novel presents a powerful critique of the dominant cultural and ideological discourses of the town of Barkley Cove, and emphasizes the importance of using language and literature as a tool for political critique and social change.

The Marxist viewpoint on the capacity of language and literature to challenge predominate cultural and ideological discourses is best illustrated by Kya's quest of education and her act of learning to read and write in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018). Marxist theory frequently sees education as a tool used by the ruling class to spread its ideology and keep the working class under control. The dominant culture wants to maintain its control over Kya and keep her on the margins by preventing her from receiving a formal education as she faced the consequences of attending school for only one day. Kya faced extreme ridicule from her classmates who treated her as trash reflecting the ideology of their own society. Nevertheless, Kya's will to learn shows how literacy has the power to change lives and how acquiring knowledge can be rebellious.

Kya's potential to produce and publish books as well as her self-taught reading abilities with the aid and guidance of Tate are acts of protest against existing cultural and ideological discourses that aim to suppress and marginalize her. Marxist ideology views literature and language as potent weapons that may confront and expose the unjust social structures and disparities. Kya breaks free from the restrictions imposed by the governing class and asserts her autonomy and uniqueness by creating and releasing her own books. Her written words develop into a vehicle for self-expression, allowing her to share her

experiences, viewpoints, and difficulties with a larger audience. This creative act of resistance subverts the prevailing cultural narratives and gives Kya and anybody else who connects with her story the power to question and confront the current social framework. Kya was given a platform to express her agency and question the dominant narratives that had previously silenced her through the publication of her journals, which allowed her to communicate her experiences and points of view. Marxist theory holds that the ruling class, which also owns the means of production, exerts influence over the publishing industry, which frequently promotes and upholds the ideology of the dominant culture. By self-publishing her writings, Kya was able to overcome this hierarchical framework and take back control of her own narrative. Through this act of self-expression, she was able to confront the prevalent notions that sought to define and marginalize her by expressing her unique opinions, feelings, and issues.

Kya's self-esteem and sense of belonging were boosted by the wider audience Kya received as a result of publishing her writings. In a capitalist culture, one's capacity to fit in and flourish within the dominant cultural norms is frequently linked to success and recognition. Kya surpassed expectations by publishing despite being a marginalized person who lives on the periphery of society. Her poems were well received by readers, which not only gave her a sense of validation but also challenged the prevailing cultural discourses that denigrated or ignored her. By claiming her place in the world, Kya was able to strengthen her sense of self-worth and competence.

The protagonist's journals were published, and as a result she now had some financial and personal freedom. Marxist ideology

maintains that the working class is frequently exploited for its labor and that the ruling class has a disproportionate amount of economic power. Kya's writings were effectively marketed and sold, enabling her to escape oppressive systems and financial reliance. She was able to safeguard her own livelihood as a result. This financial independence not only challenged the generally held notion that people from underprivileged backgrounds are prone to poverty and servitude, but also gave her a sense of agency and control over her life. Furthermore, her proficiency with language and its manipulation is an illustration of how literature may contradict preconceived notions. She has access to a wide range of perspectives, information, and ideas from her considerable reading, which she can use to evaluate and question the dominant cultural narratives. Kya is able to develop her own ideas and create a worldview independent of the imposed ideology of the ruling class through reading literature. By actively participating in reading and writing, Kya actively fights against the forces that would restrict and rule her and helps to write her own tale. Her literary and literacy endeavors show how storytelling and language have the capacity to upend conventional narratives and give marginalized people the voice they need.

Kya uses her literacy skills and her ability to write and sell books to fight against the marginalization the ruling class has put upon her. As Tate attempted to teach Kya how to read, she tells him “I wasn't aware that words could hold so much. I didn't know a sentence could be so full” (Owens 83). she encounters the transformational power of words for the first time during their reading exercise. Her reading breakthrough and her knowledge of the power of words to influence

readers come together at this precise time. The story emphasizes the importance of words in the fields of science and literature. In addition to bringing her career success and financial security, Kya's ability to recognize and categorize components of the natural world on her own also demonstrates her ability to use poetry to transcend the physical world. She gains the self-assurance to assert her individuality through her literary acts of resistance, which also inspire others to challenge the existing social order. Through her involvement with literature, Kya investigates the power of language to transform. Through this exploration, she deepens her awareness of the world and develops her own opinions independent of the imposed ideology of the ruling class.

4. Conclusion:

The novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) by Delia Owens is subjected to Marxist literary critique, which reveals the complex interactions between the experiences of the individual and the wider social and economic institutions. The natural setting of the Marsh is portrayed in the book as a potent metaphor for resistance to prevailing cultural and ideological ideologies. Marxist theory makes it clear that the Marsh is an alternative setting where Kya, the main character, confronts the repressive forces at work in the larger world.

In order to illustrate the fundamental inequities and power dynamics that characterize society, the novel addresses the link between individual instances and governing structures. Kya's miserable existence in the Marsh is a mirror of the exploitation and class warfare that characterize Marxist thought. She demonstrates her opposition to the current economic mechanisms that aim to marginalize and exploit her by being resourceful, tough, and independent while traversing the

natural habitat. Additionally, the Marsh acts as a focal point for opposition to prevailing ideological and cultural ideologies. Kya's close relationship with nature and her capacity to find comfort and fulfillment there pose a threat to the societal norms and ideals espoused by the ruling class. The Marsh turns into a place where Kya can create her own identity without being constrained by society norms. By challenging the prevailing cultural assumptions and providing a vision of resistance and liberation, it represents a space where alternative ways of being in the world are conceivable.

In conclusion, *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) serves as an example of how Marxist literary criticism can be used by illustrating the connection between personal experiences and more significant social and economic systems. The novel's depiction of nature as a place of resistance highlights the capacity of alternative settings and viewpoints to oppose prevalent cultural and ideological discourses. The novel challenges readers to contemplate the transformative possibilities of resistance against oppressive forces and to critically analyze the power dynamics that are inherent in society through the prism of Marxism. The work of Delia Owens ultimately emphasizes the significance of identifying and challenging dominating systems in order to imagine and work toward a more fair and just world.

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ملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة رواية (2018) *Where the Crawdads Sing* للكاتبه داليا أونز من منظور النقد الأدبي الماركسي، مركزة على كيفية تصويرها للصلة بين التجارب الشخصية والمؤسسات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية الأكبر. يعمل الموقع الطبيعي للمستنقع كمكان استعاري للمقاومة ضد مؤسسات باركلي كوف الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، ويبحث البحث في كيفية مساهمة التفاوتات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية في شعور الشخصية الرئيسية كايا بالاعتراب والوحدة من خلال استكشاف المفاهيم الماركسية الأساسية مثل القاعدة والبنية الثقافية والتحرر وصراع الطبقات. يؤكد البحث قيمة الجهود الجماعية والتضامن في مواجهة التسلسل الهرمي للسلطة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يحقق البحث في دور اللغة والأدب في الرواية، مشيراً إلى كيفية استخدام أوينز للغة والبلاغة لانتقاد السرديات الثقافية والأيديولوجيات السائدة والدعوة إلى العدل الاجتماعي والمساواة، من خلال قراءة نقدية لمقاطع رئيسية من الرواية. يوضح البحث كيف يمكن أن يكون الأدب أداة قوية للنقد السياسي والتغيير الاجتماعي، مشدداً على أهمية تحليل اللغة والبلاغة المستخدمة في الأعمال الأدبية لفهم كامل أبعادها الاجتماعية والسياسية